

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 2, 4, 9, 10 and 12 as follows:

1. (currently amended) A dehydrated shelf stable vegetable product which comprises a vegetable piece having a moisture content of about 12% or less, having a substantially intact cellular structure, prepared by partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and optionally where the moisture content of the partially dehydrated vegetable piece is not 12% or less, thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.
2. (currently amended) A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot, and pumpkin, and the like.
3. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 1 or 2 which includes one or more added solutes.
4. (currently amended) A vegetable product according to claim 3 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose, and sorbitol and other water activity controlling solutes.

5. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 1 having a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.
6. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 5 having a moisture content from 4% to 6%.
7. (original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content which is from about 8% to about 20%.
8. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is further dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 10%.
9. (currently amended) A process for the preparation of a dehydrated, rapidly rehydrating, vegetable product which comprises partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and optionally where the moisture content of the partially dehydrated vegetable piece is not 12% or less, thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes. *new in after*
10. (currently amended) A process according to claim 9 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot, and pumpkin, and the like.

11. (original) A process according to claim 9 wherein prior to compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension one or more solutes are added to the piece.

12. (currently amended) A process according to claim 11 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose, and sorbitol ~~and other water activity controlling solutes.~~

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13. (original) A process according to claim 9 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.

14. (original) A process according to claim 13 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from 4% to 6%.
